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ABSTRACT

For more than a decade there has been great interest in educational circles about school-linked services ways by which children can receive the full range of social services they need to enter their classrooms ready to learn and parents can get the help they need to support their children's development. This publication presents summaries of the proceedings from a day-long conference on school-linked services. The following presentations are summarized: (1) "Welcoming Remarks" (Esther Wattenberg); (2) "Anchoring School-Linked Services in Sobering Realities: A Glance at the Past and a Searching Stare at the Present" (Paula Allen Meares); (3) "Response from School Social Workers: A Minnesota Perspective" (Sharon MacDonald); (4) "A Prize-Winning Innovation: FAST (Family and Schools Together)" (Lynn McDonald); (5) "Two Local Programs of Excellence: Project Kofi" (Rudolph J. Rosseau III); (6) "Two Local Programs of Excellence: Aquila Community Together (ACT)" (Judy Halper); (7) "Panelists Address the Hard-Headed Questions. What Works?" (8) "Confronting the Problems: School-Linked Services Re-Examined" (Heather Weiss); and (9) "Constructive Critics: Provocative Questions." References follow the summaries, and a 31-item bibliography is attached. (SLD)

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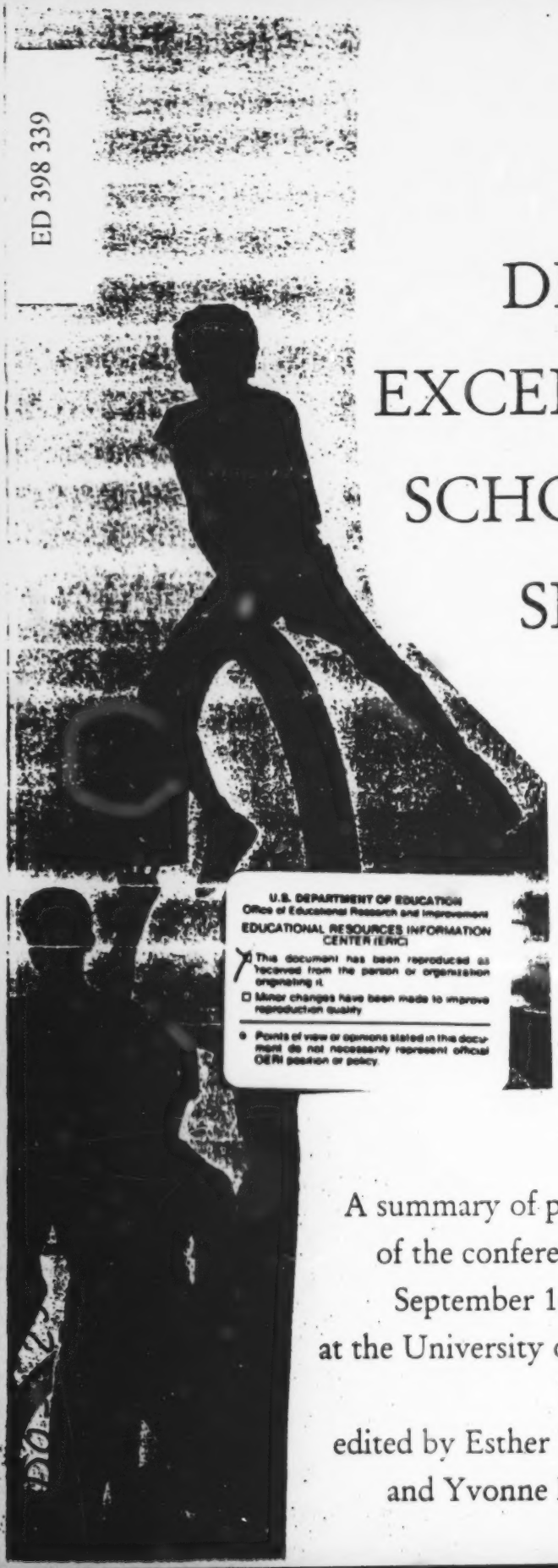

# DEFINING EXCELLENCE FOR SCHOOL-LINKED SERVICES

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A summary of proceedings
of the conference held
September 14, 1995
at the University of Minnesota

edited by Esther Wattenberg
and Yvonne Pearson



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# DEFINING EXCELLENCE FOR SCHOOL-LINKED SERVICES

A summary of the proceedings
of the conference held
September 14, 1995
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and Yvonne Pearson

Sponsored by the University of Minnesota's:

- Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare
- School of Social Work
- Center for Urban Regional Affairs
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Summaries prepared by Yvonne Pearson.

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# Acknowledgments

We recognize, with appreciation, the key contributions to this conference made by representatives of the College of Education, the School of Social Work, and the various state departments linked to children's services. Special thanks also go to the Advisory Committee members representing school personnel, family and mental health collaboratives, county social service systems, and advocates for strengthening family and children's programs. Together, this group, providing their wisdom and advice, formulated a framework for this conference.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), and the Bush Foundation and IV-E funds through the Minnesota Department of Human Services, for both monies and in-kind support that made these proceedings possible. The tangible contribution of financial support for the conference from CURA and the Bush IV-E grant made it possible for us to offer this all-day conference for a bare bones cost. The overflow audience reflected the value of this contribution.

Yvonne Pearson contributed her astute editorial skills to the intimidating task of summarizing the various exchanges, presentations, and commentaries that form the basis of these proceedings. We appreciate her attention to both the facts and the spirit of the meeting.

Mary Kaye LaPointe shepherded the development of the conference from the moment of conception to the conclusion of the event and the record of the proceedings. Her pursuit of details in bringing the proceedings to a conclusion is a reflection of her tireless attention to this task.

Chris McKee brought her excellent talents for proofreading and final editing to the final stages of this publication. We are indebted to her careful attention to detail. Louise Duncan provided expertise in design, layout, and production of the proceedings.

To all, we acknowledge, with appreciation, the interest, concern, and care to assure an accurate record of this meeting on school-linked services.

Esther Wattenberg
May, 1996

# Introduction To Proceedings

For more than a decade there has been a crescendo of activities loosely described as "school-linked services"—a search for ways in which children will receive the full range of social services they need to enter their classrooms ready to learn, and parents will get the targeted help they need to support their children's education, health, growth, and development. The school and social services systems are equally responsible for a collaboration in making a dynamic link among communities, families, and children.

In preparation for this conference, a thicket of demonstration and experimental projects was examined. The target population was identified as the underserved population of school children at risk—younger children in elementary school. The conference was intended to raise a challenging question: Can we go beyond the rhetoric of "collaboration," "community-based," "family-centered," "shifting paradigms," and "cross-systems" to arrive at models that provide for every child an optimum chance to be a successful student?

With this question in mind, an advisory committee was organized with an expressed purpose: to formulate a day-long program that would provide context, theory, models, and present the "state of the art" on school-linked services. These proceedings capture, in part, the dynamic exchanges of the day.

Esther Wattenberg
May, 1996

# Welcoming Remarks

*Esther Wattenberg*
*Director, Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare*
*Professor, School of Social Work*
*Associate, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs*
*University of Minnesota*

In her opening remarks, Esther Wattenberg noted that there is a "sturdy, vigorous, and exciting movement for school-based services" that is about a decade old.

However, she cautioned, "as we speak, the social landscape of this country is being drastically changed. The first round of congressional debates suggests there will be severe cuts in meeting basic human needs. How all of this will impact children and families is yet to be understood, but it brings this issue to the forefront: Can the schools and the social service system form a partnership that will provide for every child an optimum chance to grow up in a healthy and nurturing environment?"

"Everyone involved in school-linked services understands that economic and social conditions show most prophetically in the faces of the children who are seen in the school system. They are hardship's first victims. This brings us together in a fierce commitment to develop a partnership between the schools and the social service system for children and families."

"The question we are raising today is: Do schools have what they need, and do social services have what they need, for this partnership?"

# Anchoring School-Linked Services in Sobering Realities: A Glance at the Past and a Searching Stare at the Present

*Paula Allen Meares, Ph.D.*
*Dean, School of Social Work*
*University of Michigan*
*Ann Arbor, Michigan*

Paula Allen Meares began her remarks by quoting William Julius Wilson, University of Chicago, author of the foreword in Lizabeth Schorr's book, *Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage:*

> Ms. Schorr is fully aware of the paramount importance of policies to promote economic growth, create more jobs, and expand job training...but she also recognizes that non-economic strategies are important for reaching the future of America's most vulnerable children. One of the most important contributions of this book is that Ms. Schorr's discussion of highly successful local or community interventions in the areas of education, health, social services, and family support dramatically contradict conservative assumptions about the intractability of problems of the truly disadvantaged.

## Evolution of Social Services in the Schools

Meares said that beginning in 1906, the history of school social work has reflected a resilient service, responding to changing needs, external conditions, new knowledge about how kids learn and grow, and attention to the areas of litigation and legislation.

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There is a long history in the United States of providing non-educational services to children in a school setting. "For example, as a part of social reform efforts early in this country, health services were provided by dentists and doctors on a voluntary basis. ...The primary goal of the earliest efforts was to provide health and social services to help immigrant children and those individuals who were experiencing difficulty in integrating into this society. Today's renewed interest in this concept is intended to improve academic performance and competitiveness of children who are vulnerable."

Citing R. LaVine's 1991 review of literature on school social work, Meares emphasized several aspects of the school social worker's role today.

1. The school social worker is responsible for interpreting the school's culture for the family and the family culture for the school.

2. The role is not static, but evolves in response to: the dynamic and changing mission of education; the school in which the worker is employed; the changing demographics of the community in which the school is nested; litigation; legislation; professional values, knowledge, and relationships.

3. School social work has expanded from direct service (one-on-one casework services) to a variety of interventions, including group work, advocacy, work with parents and school staff.

4. School social workers have become identified as support personnel who reach out to mobilize and coordinate services of community agencies that can augment the programs offered in the school. "Hopefully, these services promote increased pupil attendance, performance, and improved functioning."

5. School social work involves consultation and collaboration with teachers and administrators who serve on various multidisciplinary and support teams.

Meares also noted the importance of an ecological framework: "an ongoing assessment of ways in which collaboration among home, school, and community agencies needs to be integrated to reduce obstacles to student achievement and school attendance."

School social workers, Meares believes, are hampered by system expectations regarding the jobs they must perform. There is a conflict between mandated services, which take up significant portions of school social workers' time, and tasks which they rate as important, according to the findings of a collaborative research effort by Meares, conducted under the auspices of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and the Educational Testing Service (ETS) at Princeton University. In a national survey, school social workers were asked to rate the complexity and importance of various job dimensions required by their practice in school settings. The purpose of the research was to identify the knowledge necessary for successful job performance and to provide the basis for a national system to establish credential criteria for school social workers.

The study identified several job dimensions, including home school liaison, educational counseling with children, and facilitating and advocating families' use of community resources. The subjects were asked which tasks in each job dimension were mandated and which were preferred, and "the findings hold implications for our lack of visibility in this very important movement," said Meares. The study found that 60 to 70 percent of school social workers' time was invested in the special education population. The workers said their preferred tasks are to: help foster the linkage between home, school and community; develop preventative programs that catch kids before they become casualties of this troubled system; and advocate and network on behalf of families. Meares said, "I believe we welcome new opportunities, but are handicapped by organizational barriers, by expectations placed upon us

through various channels. Our challenge is: How do we break out of these existing expectations and mandates to move into this new movement?"

Meares also said she was very disappointed to discover in the findings of the study that leadership and policy making were given low ratings by school social workers. She believes this is due to "some of the variables just identified."

Linked services were identified as critical ingredients for the well-being of children at a recent conference, "School-Linked Comprehensive Services for Children and Families," in Washington D.C. Meares said, "According to the proceedings of this particular conference, having school as a hub for providing services is not only the most efficient way to provide services, but also points to the interconnectedness of the network. Affirming that children are part of families and families are part of communities and the school itself quite properly serves to link them together in a meaningful way. Because the school is the dominant institution in the community, children are necessarily part of the system."

"Not everyone buys into this. There are those who believe the schools have taken on too much, and that additional services will obstruct the primary goal of education. However, there is hope. Recent federal legislation places a high priority on integration of services and linking of groups. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Goals 2000, The Enterprise Zone, and Enterprise Community Initiatives call on communities to develop comprehensive, locally-determined strategies for creating economically healthy communities. It offers us an unprecedented opportunity to respond to the challenge."

## The Intellectual Backdrop of the School-Link Services Movement

According to Crowson and Boyd's 1993 article in the *American Journal of Education*, there are four major intellectual perspectives driving the school-linked services movement:

1. *Ecology of schooling.* This involves a renewed appreciation of the ecological relationship among schools, families and neighborhoods.

2. *Investment perspective.* Our human capital is important to us as a nation. Likewise society believes that by investing in education now, we reduce and prevent welfare dependency in the future. "However, it is clear to me that an investment in education, without investing in housing, health care, community-based services, will not accomplish the objective," noted Meares.

3. *A variant of the investment perspective.* The goals of the school are advanced if the school itself works to recreate a sense of community and to develop productive linkages with families and the community in which it is nested.

4. *Emphasis on child development.* You cannot separate care and education, and schools must address both. James Comer, Yale University, argues that there are critical developmental pathways in the lives of

children which are rooted in home and family background and that need to be merged effectively with developmental reinforcement by our schools.

Crowson and Boyd say that other forces undergirding this movement include increased parental involvement in school governance, community-school partnerships, school-to-community outreach, and instructional partnerships.

Mears went on to summarize what is known about school-linked services from research and from practice wisdom:

- The diversity and rapid growth of school-linked services are recent phenomenon, perhaps fueled by the prevalence of poverty, the growing number of pupils who are underachieving, the increased stress on the American family, and the lack of community supports.
- Valid information about school-linked comprehensive services is scanty in the literature. While social workers are strategic in conceptualizing and implementing comprehensive service plans, their role is not always acknowledged.
- The most successful collaborative services are cost effective over the long run.
- Early intervention makes a difference.
- The school-linked/integrated collaborative services movement strives to make existing services more relevant, flexible and effective.
- School-linked services require competent leadership. Meares emphasized this point, "I suppose I'm biased because I think school social workers ought to be central, ought to be at the helm of this movement."
- School-linked collaborative services are often built on fragmented, fragile financial foundations that are sometimes insufficient, but there are ways in which we can work around that.
- The scarce literature on school-linked services nearly always makes reference to the inclusion of cultural diversity and multicultural understanding. "In other words, this approach is typically seen as more sensitive to the unique needs of children of color and those of different ethnic backgrounds."
- The school-linked services effort is part of a larger movement of the integration of education, health and social services for children. Integration does not typically mean merger, but rather increased collaboration among them. "In the school-linked services movement, school is the critical participant in planning and governing collaborative effort. However, this can become problematic. One of the major criticisms is that no single institution or human service provider can be expected to understand, intervene, and prevent social problems and their consequences."

## Barriers and Problematic Issues

Meares discussed the following barriers facing the school-linked services movement:

- *Organizational and governance structure issues.* The school system and related agencies must learn to modify organizational structure to embrace a collaborative model that requires shared governance and, at the same time, the need to serve a particular population. "Coordination among education and human service providers truly is the cornerstone of this movement. ...We have difficulty communicating within the school about the welfare of children, do we not? We have difficulty dividing tasks on behalf of children even within a multidisciplinary staffing. Now how do we effectively combine services from outside the school into meaningful partnership that moves the agenda forward?"
- *Funding and resources.* The current categorical model is very problematic. "Yet there are signs of hope. There are new partnerships. The Kellogg Foundation has taken a real leadership role in the Detroit Public Schools in supporting partnerships that involve the school system, the university, as well as various communities, so there is hope."
- *Youths not in schools.* One criticism that has been lodged against the movement is that school-based may not be the most appropriate approach for all children and families. Many of the neediest children, particularly drop-outs, are not in school. What happens to them?"
- *Undefined leadership roles.* How do you begin if you want to establish a school-linked service in your community? An advocate needs to begin with a needs assessment, a feasibility study. "Who among the school-based disciplines is best prepared to manage the complicated structures and relationships? I hear school social workers. I'm biased. I would agree."
- *Differing opinions and turfism.* "That is a function of how we educate our school-based personnel. ...We need interdisciplinary preservice programs for teachers, psychologists, school social workers, and other professionals."
- *A failure to emphasize the need to evaluate outcomes.* "It is important for us to begin to replicate what we know works. I'm a strong advocate of the need to evaluate these initiatives."



## Implications for School Social Work

Meares noted that the relationship between school social workers and those employed by other community-based agencies must be reviewed. She quoted a recent policy statement by the National Alliance of Pupil Services Organizations:

> School-based pupil services personnel comprise a critical element which forms a natural bridge between educators and community



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personnel who enter schools to provide services. They are of the school as well as in the schools; they understand school systems. They can serve to mediate, interpret and negotiate between other school personnel and persons entering the school from outside the system.

Meares added, "I believe school social workers can build these linkages. It is part of their history, their mission, and their educational preparation. They can facilitate the interagency planning that needs to go on and implement programs as well as engage in problem solving along the way."

"Historically we have played a critical role in developing healthy ecosystems for pupils and their families. We are the bridge between and among relationships and agencies that build informal and formal supports. We have the training and knowledge to manage complex relationships, and we are very familiar with key internal and external service providers. Why haven't we been more vocal about this important movement?"

"Perhaps our hesitation is related to the fact that we are involved in providing the mandated services and haven't had the opportunity to think creatively and substantively about how we can fit and help facilitate this movement. ...Many see the school-linked services movement as being the tool to restructure schooling in America. Successful implementation of school-linked services requires new roles and responsibilities for all school-based personnel. I know some school social workers have risen to the challenge, but I am personally concerned that we are not at the helm of the movement and we need to rise to the challenge. ...I was a practicing school social worker. I understand the constraints, the expectations. But I do believe if we don't rise to the occasion, this movement could pass us by, and we have so much to offer."

"... How do we begin to move into and embrace this new movement?"

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# Response from School Social Workers: A Minnesota Perspective

*Sharon MacDonald, M.S.W.*
*School Social Worker*
*Hopkins High School*
*Hopkins, Minnesota*

Sharon MacDonald began by saying she believes school social workers are "attacked on several fronts." The changing dynamics in the federal government trickle down to state and local government.

The Minnesota School Social Work Association has had to work hard in the legislature to maintain licensure through the Board of Teaching. "The underlying result is, as school social workers, we begin to feel we are underappreciated or in some way not thought to be full members in the school community. We hope we have demonstrated to the legislature that we are as necessary in the school setting as other members of the school team."

Minnesota, as a whole, is experiencing considerable change on many fronts. The Department of Education, which has just one month to live and will then become part of the Department of Children, Families, and Learning, is experiencing daily turmoil. "There was a comment in the newspaper the other day talking about the number of positions that have been eliminated in the curriculum services area. People don't know who to call in the department because the changes are so rapid and ongoing, and that's a tragedy. We need to be supported at the state level."

School social workers also feel discouraged and unsupported locally. "There is a tremendous push by conservative parent groups in many districts to elect school board members who oppose much of the work that we do. ...We have, on our flanks, people who would like to see us do things differently or perhaps not even do things."



Social workers have an inordinate amount of work to do in their jobs. "As I see it, we are absolutely gifted in our ability to be strong in all of this, and I think that we need one another as we work to support ourselves in these challenges."

MacDonald then noted that she supports collaboration "one hundred percent philosophically," but that "the realities are far more on the barrier page." Collaboration is extremely complex, and blending individual organizational structures is very difficult. In addition, administrators often are not cognizant

of the need for collaboration and so are reluctant to give away power or even share information. "One of the huge issues we're dealing with is: Who are the decision makers? Who will hold the power? Who will hold the purse strings? It's really all about money and power."

Another formidable barrier is the fear of litigation. Thus, "data privacy concerns, sharing student information, having outside people come into our building, all of that is viewed with a sense of paranoia about what this will mean to us legally."

Despite these barriers, "change is our specialty... I believe the system is one of our clients, and we can address it as well if not better than most people can."

In summary, she said: "Yes, I think we have incredible barriers. Yes, I think we have incredible amounts of work on our plate, but I do believe that we have not only the education and the knowledge, but also the ability to know about supporting one another. If we can work together as a unit of school social workers and others interested in children, then obviously these barriers can at least be addressed and perhaps overcome."

### *A question and answer session followed MacDonald's remarks:*

Q: An audience member asked Paula Allen Meares: "Who do you think is leading this movement of school-based services?"

A: *Meares* said the health area has been instrumental, with the school nurse groups in the forefront. "That's were I have found most of the momentum."

Q: A questioner identifying herself as working with a family services collaborative observed that they were faced with needing to share a decreasing support structure with the community. There is a need to augment and enhance the linkages that support the whole community rather than focusing just on the school social worker. One entity cannot take on all the responsibility.

A: *Meares* responded, "We need a community-based model as well as a school-linked model to co-exist...Though critical, schools have an awfully lot to do. We often give schools more and more to do and never the resources."

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### *Other audience comments were:*

"I totally agree with this team approach, but we can't do it all. On any given day we're barely surviving. ...I'm looking to kids' attendance issues and kids beating up other kids, and to actually provide services. There is not time in the day."

"I think it's important, as financial and community resources become more limited, that we don't divide ourselves and begin blaming each other. I worry that there's an aspect of school-linked services that sounds simplistic to

the general public—the notion of how may social workers does a child need? The fact is...I cannot serve all the needs of a child and family who have complex needs. I do need to team, and I value the relationship I have with my colleagues in the community. I need them to be effective..."

"We are finding the school system is starting to say, 'You can't do all this collaboration. We don't want a family-based worker sitting as part of school teaming for our students. The relationships get strained.'"

"Our conversation is awfully professionally centered. I want to raise the question: What is the community? How can we partner with the community? How do we operationalize that? What can we do to facilitate stronger communities so communities themselves have norms and internal sanctions that are really needed. That's prevention, not all the interventions the professionals are doing. I wish we could focus away from professionals."

# A Prize-Winning Innovation: FAST (Family and Schools Together)

*Lynn McDonald, Ph.D.*
*Director of Innovative Programs*
*Family Service America*
*Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

FAST is a prize-winning program that is being replicated in fourteen states. McDonald described the spirit and core of the program as "grounded in the questions to the consumer: What do you need?...It seems to me that one of the collaborative partners we need to always include is the parent."

The FAST program is a research-based social work strategy for dealing with an urgent social problem. McDonald explained that she looked at research and theory regarding families who survived the Depression as a strategy for constructing FAST. "Rubin Hill's theory suggested that family resources and social support and family perception of those stresses were what helped people survive the Depression."

FAST goals are to:

- Enhance family functioning.
- Prevent the target child from experiencing school failure.
- Prevent substance abuse by the child and family.
- Reduce the stress that parents and children experience from daily life situations.

## Program Description



First, the school identifies children about whom they are concerned, *with the teacher as the referral source*. Then the school, perhaps through the school social worker, explains to parents how the referral took place. The school also gets a confidentiality release signed so a collaborative team (FAST team) can do in-home visits and invite families to voluntarily participate in the eight-week program.

Second, the whole family participates in an eight-week series of multiple family sessions. The program tries to build interconnectedness among families and professionals. There is a graduation after eight weeks. "There is a Certifi-

cate of Completion, pomp and circumstance, mortar boards. Friends and family come. I've been to homes two and three years later that had nothing on the wall except the graduation certificate from the FAST program."

Third, there are two years of follow-up with linkage and referral to community services. The graduates are supported by collaborative teams to run their own follow-up programs with monthly meetings. Additional eight-week graduates feed into the follow-up programs, which consequently increase in size over the two-year period.

The age of children who are targeted is four to nine years; the average age of the child being identified by teachers is eight.

Program activities in the eight-week sessions include:

- A meal in which everyone eats together at family tables. McDonald explained, "Children are asked by the FAST professional teams to serve their parents the meal, so parents immediately notice that the team supports the child's being respectful of the parent. That's the first message people get, and it's a different kind of message."
- Singing. "People bring in songs, and we have a theme song."
- Structured family communication exercises. "They have the experience of doing things that are fun. It's very hokey. Lots of color. The feeling of elementary school."
- A "family feelings" identification exercise game. "They pick up a face with feelings on it, put it over their heart, and each act out the feelings."
- Buddy time with two adults.
- Parent support time while children play outside.
- One-to-one quality time.
- Winning as a family unit. McDonald explained, "We have a fixed lottery. Everyone wins once. We make this deal with the parents in the recruitment visit, but we don't tell the kids. When they win, they are celebrated with lots of hype. The parents are given a big baking pan and $35, and are invited and required to cook for everybody the next time. Research shows people like to be able to give back. Carl Dunst's work with low income families shows there needs to be a barter system. It's a respectful approach."
- Closing ritual: a game and a positive announcement time.



## FAST Program Staff

The FAST professional teams are collaborative teams, consisting of a minimum of four members. The teams include:

- A school staff person, generally a school social worker.

- Two community agency representatives. Usually a mental health or family service agency or alcohol and other drug treatment agency are involved in order to have active linkages to treatment programs for domestic violence, alcohol and other drugs. This allows families to become acquainted with the programs and self-refer, if they choose.
- A parent who has graduated, and is a paid partner.

McDonald discussed actions they take to increase the success of recruitment and retention. Recruitment is done by the member of the collaborative team who is the best match to go into the home. The teams are trained to inform families of the referral in ways that defuse resistance. FAST follows recommendations made by sociologist Doug Maynard, who researched bad news diagnoses. They also follow the recommendations of Richard Barth's literature on what gets people to come to things: a free meal, free child care, parent support meetings as respite care time, and family prizes.

McDonald reported that they "feel good about their retention rates, and the recruitment rates, depending on how the identification is done." In Madison, 73 percent of people in the first fourteen groups who came to one session completed the eight weeks. In Wisconsin's thirty sites, 85 percent who went once graduated. Nationally, 88 percent of the participants in twenty-two states graduated.

## FAST Program Participants

The average age of the identified child is eight. Teachers identify more boys than girls, which may reflect gender bias. McDonald said, "We need to do some casefinding work with teachers to help them be able to see depression or withdrawal as an issue that's as urgent as acting out behavior."

Nationally, about half of the families have a high school education. About half are two-parent families and half are single-parent families. About 38 percent of the families are Caucasian, 30 percent Hispanic, 27 percent African American, and 2 percent Asian American. Most families have two children, with parents in their thirties. About 49 percent of the families report receiving some form of public assistance. Fifty-eight percent scored in the normal range on family adaptability and 78 percent were in the normal range for family cohesion. McDonald said she wanted to emphasize that, in general, the families are socially isolated, highly stressed, and caring.



## Theoretical Background

McDonald then discussed the theoretical background on which the FAST program is based. She said it works to build protective factors for children who may be at risk for further problems later on. One of these factors is bonding between mother and child, between parents, among self-help parent groups, and strengthening the connections among the family, the community, and the school.

The core of the program is empowering the parents to be the primary prevention agent of their own child. Dr. Kate Kogan of the University of Washington in Seattle found that the primary caretaker bond with the child is stabilizing. She developed a version of play therapy in which the parents are coached to deliver play therapy services to their child. Based on this, the FAST program has multiple dyads spending fifteen minutes doing play therapy. They play with special toys in a way that's non-directive and non-judgmental, following the child's need. McDonald said, "When we ask kids two years later, 'What did you like about FAST?', they say, 'Special play.' ...What kids want is their own parent."

The program also gives parents the opportunity to connect with each other. Research by Deborah Belle on low-income depressed mothers shows that they take out their stresses on their kids, unless they have another adult they can talk to every day for fifteen minutes. Thus, the second fifteen minutes of the FAST meetings is used as time for husband and wife to spend together, or for two single mothers to spend together.

Building group bonds and networks is also a key part of the program, based on research by a number of people. Rubin Hill's research on depression supports the need for networks. Byron Egeland (at the University of Minnesota) identified a combination of high stress and social isolation as the biggest predictor of child abuse and neglect. Robert Wahler's research on child abuse and neglect showed the importance of parents having someone else to talk to. C.T. Cochrane has ten years of research funded by the National Institute of Mental Health that shows the biggest predictor of school success for children is outreach into the home and family clustering. Thus, during the third segment of the meetings, parents are brought together for forty-five minutes in a self-help group. McDonald said, "It's a lets-get-people-together-and-find-your-own-wisdom idea, find your own solutions. You are here to help each other help your kids succeed. And building an independent support network has nothing to do with the professionals. This is the key to this program as to why people want to come back to the program. The group bonds. They're very isolated. They want to have somebody to talk to. All of us are isolated and want people to talk to."

McDonald reported that evaluation of the FAST program indicates a statistically significant improvement as reported by teachers and parents nationwide.

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# Two Local Programs of Excellence

## *Project Kofi*

*Rudolph J. Rousseau III, Ph.D.*
*Director, Project Kofi*
*St. Paul, Minnesota*

Rudolph Rousseau began his remarks by saying that Project Kofi has been a "saving grace" for African American boys. Rousseau quoted Lafayette Rivers, a ten-year-old African American boy, as published in Alex Kotlowitz' *There Are No Children Here*: "If I grew up, I'd like to be a bus driver." This quote, he said, reflects the reality of high morbidity rates for African American males. Nearly two out of every three homicide victims in the Twin Cities are African American males.

The name of the project, Kofi, is taken from the Akan (Ashanti) of West Africa and reflects the embracing of African culture. The word means "child of growth."

Project Kofi is "truly a collaborative of the school system, the county social service system, and a nonprofit community agency," said Rousseau. It is a school-based, family-focused community support service collaborative of the St. Paul Public Schools, District 625, Ramsey County Community Human Services Department, and the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Rousseau outlined the admission criteria of the program, which requires that clients be: male; of African American ancestry; a Ramsey County resident; a student in grades three to six, attending designated schools; and have parental or guardian approval and client or family agreement to participate. The project is not required to give participants formal diagnoses in order to receive funding for services. The project operates in Maxwell Elementary School, Galtier Elementary School, and the school programs within the Rondo Education Center (Benjamin E. Mays Elementary, Capitol Hill Elementary, and Museum Magnet).



The project, defined as a family community support service, provides the following services:

- Consultation and outreach to the student, his family, and his teachers and school.
- Assistance in the acquisition of culturally and developmentally responsible life skills.
- Parent support and education for parenting.



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- Leisure, recreational, and support activities for the student and his family.
- Crisis assistance to the student and his family.

Rousseau elaborated on the services, saying the project offers "fully orchestrated" evening programs, "with transportation and food, presentations, recreational events, and parent support groups. Our families get tickets for major creative cultural events, and we have a host of consultants from the creative arts. ...It also has a 'rites of passage' program, with a major graduation ceremony to celebrate success, an assortment of cross-generational mentorships with various people in the community, and guest speakers from various walks of life." The project has extensive case management, and all counselors have caseloads of sixteen cases.

Project Kofi's goals are to:

- Increase the African American male's positive functioning in the home, school, and community, developing in each young man: competence (something which he does well); confidence (a belief that whatever the task, he can be successful); and consciousness (an awareness of the historical greatness of African and African American men and women and their personal responsibility to the future continuation of that greatness).
- Increase and/or support positive African American family functioning in the home, school, and community.

"The goal is to bombard the boys with successful African American images," said Rousseau. "We really are a manhood development program; a male responsibility program."

The Project brings together two historical movements: the black consciousness perspective, which argues the centrality of Afrocentric cultural ideology, and a social policy perspective, which argues for the mobilization of prevailing institutions and government resources.

An outcomes evaluation was conducted for the last 2½ years using the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist, grades, attendance in school, and an annual phone survey regarding families' perceptions of the program. For the 1993-94 academic year, the children showed improvement on the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist, a decrease in the number of reports to the school office, and a decrease in the number of days absent from school.



Rouseau concluded by saying, "The richness of our program comes from holding the African American culture in high regard. It is interesting that many kids are asking to join Project Kofi. It has been de-stigmatized. Kids don't even know they're SED (severely emotionally disturbed)."

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## *Aquila Community Together (ACT)*

*Judy Halper*
*Director, Aquila Community Together*
*Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis*
*St. Louis Park, Minnesota*

Judy Halper described the origin of Aquila Community Together (ACT). She said the Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis wanted to provide more direct service in the community in which it was located. At that time, demographics were rapidly changing and the agency wished to work more with children and families. They were also aware that many people living in St. Louis Park had transportation problems. Thus, they began to think about providing social services within a school building. They asked the St. Louis Park school district if they would be interested in a program that would serve children and families living in the community, and they were agreeable to that.

ACT is beginning its fifth year of operation in St. Louis Park. The program resides in the Aquila school building. The services it delivers (every day of the school year and, to a certain degree, throughout the summer) are case management, prevention, education, and intervention. Specific services include: therapy and group services; one-to-one volunteers to children and to families who are in need of some connection to the community or mentoring or tutoring; parenting groups; educational forums; transportation; and child care.

ACT goals are:

- To help the family with day-to-day crises manage and reduce the stress they're experiencing.
- To enhance school success.
- To prevent drug abuse and other kinds of interference in a child's day.



Halper said *the school social worker is the hub of this program.* "Every reference goes through him. He's aware of all situations going on in his building, and we have the information we need in order to do the appropriate intervention. This also obviously leverages his time. His ability to provide services as a school social worker is greatly enhanced by the numbers of people who are in the building working with the children, whether it is providing therapy, working one-on-one, working with a child to stay in a classroom who might otherwise be asked to leave because behaviorally or academically he or she is

not on track, working with a group of school children during the school day or after the school day. It might be making home visits; it might be retrieving children who can't get to school because they missed the bus and the parent doesn't have a car or a phone to notify the school that their child is sick. It can be any number of things that normally a school social worker would be called upon to do by him or herself."

To ensure ongoing effectiveness of this program, Halper said they rely on parents and professionals in the community as advisors. The advisory board meets four to five times during the school year. Child care and transportation are provided to ensure the input of those being served.

ACT is also interested in developing a parent center. Research has shown that the more parents are involved with their child's education, the more successful their children are. A parent center would bring parents into the building for other than unpleasant circumstances.

ACT wants to address the issue of literacy as well. Halper said this would include "kids with intellectual ability [who are] going from year to year and grade to grade with increasing illiteracy and inability to compete in the classroom."

ACT also wants to extend their services to older children. They currently serve kindergarten through third grade. They intend to provide services to the intermediate primary building in the district as well, so that the families and children who are "getting a year or two or three of assistance from the program can be continued throughout their elementary grade school years."

Halper noted that ACT collaborates with the community. She said, "In St. Louis Park there is a grassroots community effort called Children First, and it's a desire on the part of the community to raise the awareness of everybody living in the community that it takes a whole community to raise a child and that everybody needs to be interested and willing to help their neighbors, the neighborhood, community, school, etc. We're very involved in those planning efforts."

In summary, Halper asked the question, "Do schools have what they need?" She answered by saying, "I think that the St. Louis Park Aquila School, specifically, has a good deal of what it needs. ...The program is very exciting, very fun to be a part of. One of its greatest achievements is the support and desire which the school has to have us there. That support wasn't there in 1991. ...The ACT program is really determined to stay in the school district and to look for innovative ways to fund the project, to keep growing. The teachers and the school building administration have grown to include us. We're not seen as outsiders. We're a part of the community, we're a part of the culture, and we work very closely together. It's very exciting."

Finally, Halper showed a video of a television broadcast news story on ACT. The story was done by Channel 11, KARE.

# Panelists Address the Hard-Headed Questions. What Works?

*Moderator:*
*Ann Masten, Ph.D.*
*Associate Director, Institute of Child Development*
*University of Minnesota, Twin Cities*

*Panel Members:*
*Judy Cutler*
*Coordinator, Family Resource Center*
*Anderson Elementary School*
*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

*Angela Lamb-Onayiga*
*Project Kofi*
*St. Paul, Minnesota*

Masten, who has worked extensively on understanding the resiliency process in children's development, particularly among children born in high stress environments, began the discussion with a presentation. "The premise of studying resilience is that understanding what works can provide you with some of the best guidance, if you're trying to change a system to benefit children. ...Notions that underpin resilience permeate many [school-linked services] programs. These programs focus on boosting resources. They target multiple systems in a child's life rather than a single system, facilitating protective relationships in a child's life, and boosting a child's self-efficacy." She added a cautionary note: "We have to keep in mind that systems are, themselves, highly resilient in the sense that they are very resistant to change. That's one of the barriers we have to contend with."

Professor Masten then read the questions which the panel was being asked to consider.



1. How did you deal with a reluctant teacher, a reluctant principal?
2. What occurred that made the teacher perceive your program as helpful and not just another burdensome intrusion?
3. How did you engage the involuntary parent who resisted the offer of services?
4. Did you find all the services you needed for the family and child? If not, what was missing?
5. When did you know you were successful with the child?



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She added that she thought the advisory committee, in formulating these questions, wanted these successful administrators to "tell us what they've learned about what works. ...You tell us, on the basis of your success, what do we need to know as people try to design school-linked services that are really effective?"

*Judy Cutler, coordinator of the Family Resource Center*, began by describing Anderson Elementary School. Anderson School is the multicultural, gender-fair demonstration site for Special School District Number One. It has 1,400 children, with three schools under one roof. The special education site has fifty students, the open school has 900 students, and the traditional contemporary school has 450 students. Each program has its own set of staff, principal, and groups of parents, with their own personal philosophies of education.

Cutler said that when Anderson became a multicultural demonstration site, school staff began to talk about changing curriculum to accommodate different cultural perspectives. At the same time, they knew children had to be healthy and ready to learn if they were going to take advantage of the changes. Thus, they did a needs assessment for the school.

The most critical part of any program design is the planning process. The planning process should include all of the stakeholders, and it is essential to develop relationships with the external community. In this way, you can design something that reflects the needs of the customer, the community, the children, the families. In line with this, the Family Resource Center "extended its hand to the Phillips community, at the heart of the inner city of Minneapolis. We said to them, 'Here's the situation. We need your help.'" There are some 180 agencies in the Phillips community, and Cutler said they asked about 60 of them "to come to the table. We met with about 35 of them. Each of them, after getting over the shock of being invited into the door of the school, said, 'We've got all kinds of things in our agency that we can develop with you.'"

The Family Resource Center worked with CTAR (Comprehensive Teaming to Assure Resiliency) to identify families with multiple needs, and then connect those families with advocates from community agencies.

In addition, the Family Resource Center became a prototype for the Hennepin County School-Human Services Redesign Initiative, which was being developed at the same time. The initiative is a city-wide collaboration of schools, social and health services, and the community, that uses resource centers to coordinate and improve services for children and families. Cutler said the Anderson program asked to be a prototype. "What that did was to put at our doorstep the eyes and ears of the major systems that have to be involved if you're going to make any long-standing changes within your program, your school, your community. The seven elected commissioners of Hennepin County were now at the table to support school success."

The foundation of the Anderson Family Resource Center is the connection with the parents. Thus, when parents were asked to participate on the Site Council, state grant money was used to provide money to the parents. This included gift certificates to parents doing volunteer work. "This recog-

nizes the importance of their work. They get other parents involved, and now we've got a whole school talking about the things that the Family Resource Center does. We've got parents working in the Clothes Closet getting donations, sorting, washing, and giving them to kids and families; parents searching out the food shelves that really deal with basic needs; parents working on empowerment, setting up leadership training for other parents; parents working on community policy, doing the community newsletter, working on systems issues."

Cutler went on to say, "We have a major barrier called medicine. We talk about holistic medicine, alternative medicine, herbal medicine, message therapy at Anderson because we are sensitive to culture. Have you tried talking with your doctor about that lately?" The Family Resource Center plans to meet with the CEOs of the major health maintenance organizations that provide funding for most of the families at Anderson. They want to develop an integrated funding stream so children may come into the Resource Center and have medical checkups without having to show a medical card. They believe this will help to reduce absenteeism.

Cutler then answered the questions read initially by Masten:

"It's pretty hard to be reluctant when you have another parent inviting you into the Resource Center. If you can help a child in the class-room, how does the teacher remain reluctant to use your service? If the child is cold and doesn't have a jacket, give him a jacket. Do we find all the services we need? We're working at it. We keep trying to bust down the barriers."

And, when do we know that we're successful? "I know we're successful when we see the child smile who comes in and gets that jacket or the clean pair of jeans that fit. I think that's success. I think it's success when we can get a family committed to coming to Family of Readers, and because there's another parent there supporting them, they stay in the program. I think we call it success when a parent says, 'You know, it's never been important to me to have my GED, but since I've been involved here, I think I should do that.' I think that we will probably call ourselves successful only when we can quit asking, 'Why is this child crying?'"

*Angela Lamb-Onayiga, social worker, Project Kofi,* began her remarks by describing how she began her work at Project Kofi. "I began working there as an intern. I chose Project Kofi because it had an Afrocentric approach. I saw there were so many wonderful things going on, but there were also things that I could provide for the program. I tried to get children in the program whose parents would cooperate with the program so we could have success. I got referrals from social workers, teachers, principals, and some from parents. I'd call the parents to tell them their son was referred to Project Kofi, explain the project to them, tell them that we provide an Afrocentric approach to working with families, and that it's confidential, so the school will not know their business. ...A lot of the families were worried about that."



Project Kofi staff do an intake in the home and talk with the parents about what they think the problem is. "Parents generally say it is the school," said Lamb-Onayiga. "The young men in the program are called brothers. We

say, 'This is what the program says about this young brother, and do you agree?' Sometimes they say, 'A little bit.' I'd talk about the fact that we need your involvement with your son."

"Parents started coming to family night, when we feed the families. We have a parent support group and have people come in and talk about parenting, how kids are involved in gangs. Unfortunately, a lot of our brothers know a lot about gang activity. So families really give us suggestions about things they want to be involved in. We try to do that, so we can encourage them to continue to come. We provide transportation."

Lamb-Onayiga said when the teachers complain about Project Kofi taking children out of the classroom, "I'd chuckle to myself. They're in the hallways, they're not in the classroom anyway." She tells the teacher she is there to support them, and anytime they are having trouble with a student, they can page her, and she will help get the child back in the classroom. "I was getting paged all over the place. I'd always try to respond. I'd say what's going on. [The kids would] say, 'Well, I really just wanted to see you.' I'd say, 'Well, you need to earn this time. Don't act out to come and see me. I'll work out something with your teacher, and you can earn time to come see me.' They don't usually want to talk; they want to play basketball, or play games, or go to MacDonald's, or something like that. At first, I was giving it to them because they were so out of hand that I was trying to win them over. After I won them over, I said, "Now you can earn these things.' It has really been successful."

Project Kofi also does case management with the families. For instance, when parents get electricity cut off or have other financial crises, the project helps them or makes referrals. The project also gets children into therapy.

Lamb-Onayiga said Project Kofi is successful because "teachers think we're helpful, parents know we're helpful, we like our jobs, and principals have seen that we're relieving a lot of stress in the school, because kids want to be in Kofi. There is no stigmatization. All kinds of brothers want to be in Kofi." The young men call her their aunt or godmother, rather than social worker.

"We all are one big family. I'm in the Rondo Education Center. There are three schools there, and we have about forty families at one time. It can be chaos in the beginning, but by the middle of the school year, families pretty much know and help each other. We can do a talent show where the parents are involved; skits and singing. We also have child care, and some young sisters come with their young brothers. ...Project Kofi is for the young brothers, but nobody knows that because whole families come."

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### *A question and answer session followed the presentations:*

*Masten* began by saying, "I am struck by how much you two and your programs exude the qualities that Lizabeth Schorr identified as key ingredients of successful interventions. ...I believe these two programs are going to succeed.

It's like Apollo 13, failure is not an option here." She noted the availability of staff, the flexibility and comprehensiveness of the programs, and their ingenuity.

Q: *Lamb-Onayiga* was asked, "What does Afrocentric mean, operationally? What is really engaging the African American parents? What is cultural competency?

A: She said that everyone in the program is African American. "We talk a lot about where we came from. I co-facilitate a support group with African American males, and talk to them about manhood. How do you get there? What kind of role models are in your family? Kids have projects. They have to find someone that they admire in their family or in history. ...We try to get other Africans and African Americans to come talk. ...Parents have appreciated the fact that I've listened to their child. I also always call the parents so the teachers have to deal with them. The families involved trust all of the people in Project Kofi."

Q: "How often do you have family night?"

A: *Lamb-Onayiga* said, "Every Tuesday night from six to nine."

*Cutler* added that an important part of getting families there is having "coffee and calories and goodies."

An audience member associated with the Anderson program added, "Key to both these programs is ownership. Neither one was the brainchild of an administrative committee and forced upon parents in the community. From day one at Anderson, parents were on an equal footing. In fact, they were facilitating many of the planning sessions." She noted that parents did not feel like visitors because they were participating in something they created themselves.

Q: "There is a troubling issue I want to raise...There have been articles written on the half-life of school innovations. They last about three or four years. ...So my question is, what are the challenges you still see in front of you? How are you going to make this go, over the long haul?"

A: *Cutler* said, "I guess I am of the belief that I could walk away from the Family Resource Center today, and it would continue, because we have family, parent, and community ownership of the resource center. It has a life of its own because of them. They would make sure it continued one way or another."



*Lamb-Onayiga* said, "I think Kofi will continue because everybody has bought into the program, including the school administration." She noted that they followed the children all summer, which meant they didn't have to start all over in the fall. "Continuous involvement with the family also makes it successful."

Q: "We need to move to strategies for sustainability. I worry that the systems that fund you still have their crisis mandate. Regardless of local ownership and success, when federal cutbacks are here, what's going to get cut?"

A: *Cutler* said they decided at the beginning of the program that they didn't want to get soft grant money. "We want systems change that will accommodate change in the long term. When we make a relationship with a community agency that's been there for thirty years, one would guess it's going to be there a few more years. If they're providing services in the school, that's one step. That to me is systems change. ...The dollars we spend are to recognize or reimburse parents for their involvement. That's the critical piece that could dry up. I suggest to the local PTA that they buy a bunch of gift certificates at Rainbow and Target and recognize parents for volunteering in the school. It helps to lay that foundation."

*Rudolph Rousseau*, Director of Project Kofi, said he shares the questioner's concern. Even though Kofi is part of the system, he does not feel insulated from looming cuts. He added, "I make note that the teachers and administrators are beginning to expect us to be in their building, where before we were visitors, if not aliens. Once you begin to demonstrate that you can, more times than not, assist them in their efforts to be successful in educating kids, you're in the door. I think we become more and more part of the system. ...I'm told funding streams for programs like Kofi are strong and will be around, but I'm skeptical. We continue to work on the kinds of services that will give the biggest bang for the buck and will further integrate us into the collaborative, into the school."

Q: *Esther Wattenberg* added, "The Anderson school stepped into a community with 180 programs. ...There is an explosion of programmatic efforts. ...Information systems are very incomplete, programs don't trust each other with data. ...How did you deal with all that fragmentation?"

A: *Cutler* said the fragmentation issue was one of the primary reasons they started their program. "The redesign effort has been working on doing standard intake forms, developing something where people don't have to tell their story more than once, where we know the history, so we know where to organize services. The reason for the family advocate is so they could try to eliminate some of the fragmentation for families and help them through a system. The problem hasn't gone way. I think families who now have one person going through the system with them are happy people."

# Confronting the Problems: School-Linked Services Re-Examined

*Heather Weiss, Ed.D.*
*Project Director, Harvard Family Research Project*
*Cambridge, Massachusetts*

Heather Weiss began by saying she has had an opportunity to share and learn from some of Minnesota's own local experts. "I see my own limited role as sharing knowledge and raising questions that I hope some of you will have answers to and that will engender ongoing conversation."

"I would like to start with a killer metaphor that describes the state of school-linked services: that we are inventing the plane as we're trying to fly it." She noted that the knowledge base in school-linked services is primitive, and we "have to be able to deal with the doubts and problems as we go along while we're trying to avoid crash landing."

"We have learned this plane is already low on fuel. There are current resource constraints, and we're going to have bigger ones. ...We're going to watch competition for scarce resources the likes of which we haven't seen in a long time. There will also be indirect effects: all of the programs count on existing agencies, public or private or voluntary, to provide services for their clients. They serve as casefinders, brokers, advocates in order to connect people with existing health, education, and nutrition services. We're going to watch incredible atrophy of those kinds of services. We will also feel the effects of indirect cuts, as families come into family resource centers more stressed, more needy, and unable to get their basic services."

"Our goal is a flyable plane that gets us to a safe landing. For me, that landing is that, ultimately, we've improved outcomes for kids. ...I think we're in a life threatening situation for our kids and families, nowadays. We're seeing more and more rotten outcomes. ...The nature of the task is going to require of everybody who's interested in these kinds of things constant invention, problem solving—all the kinds of skills that mean we're on red alert all the time, trying to figure out both how to sustain these programs and how to scale them up and sustain them over time. ...By the way, the best thinkers that I've run across don't have the answers. I have yet to see anybody write anything really good about how you scale up and sustain these kinds of programs."



Weiss noted that elementary school grades are critically important to the subsequent success of kids, and that considerable public, private, and particularly foundation resources, in the last ten to fifteen years, have gone to build-

ing up early childhood services. However, those gains are not sustained "unless we seriously think about restructuring what happens to those kids in elementary school years." People who look at why we can't sustain gains from things like Headstart suggest it may be due to "what happens to those kids in public schools" and the "falling off of all the support services and family support services that have been provided in the early childhood years."

Weiss also noted that children's capacity—particularly poor kids'—to learn is very much dependent upon their non-instructional needs. "I think we're making tracks on that. It's going to be a long haul to convert people to the point of view that says, in any consistent and large scale way, that kids have a range of needs and the school has some kind of responsibility to work with others in the community to make sure those needs are met, if they are going to achieve their mission—the education of kids. ...The notion of interdependence underscores this notion. Whatever agency I'm from, if I'm going to achieve whole kids, I'm necessarily going to have to depend on others in the community who serve those kids."

The issues embedded in school-linked services require that three questions be asked:

- Why school-linked services?
- What are the problems?
- What are some of the key indicators of excellence?

## Why School-Linked Services?

First, there is extreme fragmentation in the efforts to solve social problems, and second, there is an increasing public concern with rotten outcomes across all systems. "We have clear problems with increasing school failure and drop out, an escalating need for child welfare services, and increased foster care placements. We are recognizing we have growing rotten outcomes despite the fact that we seem to be throwing dollars at these problems...duplication and declining resources, more stressed families and communities, growing taxpayer frustration with rising costs, perceived inefficiency. ...So, I think we have hit a point where we have incredible public frustration. From that, responses such as school-linked services ...arise..."



Weiss added that we go to schools in particular because it is one of the few institutions uncontested in its universality and the notion that every child deserves its services. However, she noted that schools don't have a good history of working with families.

There is also a growing recognition on the part of schools that, if they are going to achieve the mission of educating, they are dependent on other sources in the community to meet kids' non-instructional needs.

There is little research to suggest that school-linked services are effective. "We are going to need to remedy that situation in the next three or four years if we are going to have increased public support for investments in school-

linked services. ...I want to make it very clear that there's not the kind of research base to move ahead. We're making our progression on the basis of faith that these things are likely to pull off."

School-linked services take many forms and have many dimensions. They are very different in every community, and "that's probably part of their appeal. They can be shaped and invented in accord with whatever a community sees as its need and its resources." Usually at the core of these services is "some kind of effort at co-location, some kind of effort at information and referral, some kind of joint planning among a variety of agencies, often including community and parents, to come up with some kind of family resource center that will provide for a variety of family and child needs somehow in connection with a school."

Weiss continued, "I would argue that there is growing support for school-linked services. We do have a growing number of strong, local, community-based models that suggest these things, difficult as they are to implement, can be implemented, can be sustained (we have some that are several years old). We have growing state interest and provision of resources for these kinds of things. New Jersey and others have begun to put a substantial amount of state money into them, and we are beginning to get a state infrastructure. With that, not trivially, comes the beginning of a political constituency, which means you then have lobbying to keep support going. We have increasing federal support, although some has been wiped out over the last couple of months. Congressman Steny Hoyer (DFL—Maryland) worked with the Department of Education to put together a task force on comprehensive services. He plans to introduce legislation that will enable the creation of more family resource centers. The school-linked services notion is embedded in the national education goal formulation at multiple points. Title XI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act allows up to 10 percent of district dollars to go for evaluating, implementing, and coordinating comprehensive services. ...We are also starting to get a training infrastructure—another necessary ingredient for these things."

## What Are the Problems?

At the same time, Weiss said, it is important to acknowledge the massive resistance to school-linked services. "I think the real work is ahead, and that's developing and testing the viability and effectiveness of school-linked services."



The lessons we've learned about the problems of developing school-linked services include: "they are very hard to do; they take a great deal of time, with lots of fits and starts. And we've run into a lot of real issues in trying to go from a single pilot who works well with a dedicated staff willing to work overtime to two, three, or four run by real human beings who aren't willing to work every night."

Establishing school-linked services is a developmental process, and it takes time. We can't have unrealistic expectations of what we can do in year one.

To have a chance of affecting child outcomes takes two to three or four years at a minimum. "It's a dance to keep momentum up, make promises about what we can achieve, so we can keep the money flowing, the staff committed, and not overpromising what can be delivered so we set up false expectations and failure."

Weiss also noted that the "nature of change we're talking about is incredibly penetrating. It means changes in everyday routines and procedures in how we do assessment and decision making and how we allocate our time and resources within schools and communities. ...It is about fundamentally changing the nature of a school,...Some earmarks of these programs are that they are holistic and family focused; that they emphasize empowerment and parent involvement; and that they underscore the need for collaboration and service integration with other agencies and from the family's perspective."

The holistic and family-focused nature of school-linked services sets up new expectations for professionals who have been trained to work with individuals. It also sets up new expectations for families. If the families are poor, they are used to being "clients" in a public social service system. They are now being asked to be partners. It will also require dealing with categorical and fragmented services.

The empowerment and parent involvement concepts also present challenges. "We have some real issues in coming up with a consistent policy on what we mean by parent involvement across school and family resources center domains." Weiss compared current parent involvement in these two domains to parallel play. Schools and agencies which have been operating from a deficit approach to families are now trying to come up with an empowerment support model, a family strengths model and are "struggling with what that means and recognizing they have a long way to go with that. ...We have a hard look to take at these services to see if they really are family-focused and have real parent involvement that represents some kind of consistent policy across these agencies."

Not everyone is in agreement regarding collaboration and integration. There is a debate on whether we should "just try to provide access to services through school-linked services and pull back from systems integration initiatives. ...Personally, I think if we don't approach some of the systemic barriers, we will never be able to scale up these initiatives successfully."

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Weiss noted the substantial number of barriers to implementing truly integrated school-linked services. She cited John O'Leary's work involving the Family Connections Program in Georgia as some of the most interesting work around on those barriers. In the early '90s there was an effort to get educators, and mental health and social services agencies together to create school-linked services at the elementary level. The program started with fifteen districts, now up to thirty, and have public/private funding, with the state providing at least 50 percent of the funding. O'Leary talked to people at the state level whose job it was to facilitate local service integration. He found the easiest things to do were: to develop family-centered, family-driven practice; co-location and shared facilities planning; and coordinated case

management. *Cross training of staff, confidentiality, and shared data bases were more difficult to achieve.* The hardest and yet to be achieved in any substantial way were integrated case management, holistic report cards that drive agency planning, shared governance, pooled funding, and one-stop intake and eligibility determination. One or two sites have made strides on those things; most have not.

O'Leary argued it is important to integrate values and culture and think about them as one does service integration, according to Weiss. It is a developmental process that unfolds over time. Policy structural changes should be made to support better front-line practice. "A lot of discussion has taken place among policy people who have not been mindful enough of the issues implied for front-line workers in service integration," said Weiss. According to O'Leary, we have to develop some notion of positive interdependence, and to do so, he suggests we must build the following from the community level:

- Common wishes and goals.
- Shared values and attitudes.
- Joint tasks and rewards for completing them, such as personnel raises, and recognition for doing things in joint ways.
- A perception of fair distribution and exchanges. This is based on the notion that equity is at the heart of effective organizations. Fairness must be seen as a combination of structural components, such as formal alternative dispute resolution policies, and more psychological components related to individual notions of equity, such as fair distribution of case loads.

## What Are Some of the Key Indicators of Excellence?

1. *Leadership.* Weiss said, "Leadership that is capable of taking risks, flexible, able to cross boundaries, and inspire change. This is hard to sustain if it is vested in one individual. Increasingly, communities are trying to develop leadership teams."
2. *Actively soliciting clients' perspectives and actively involving them.* "What do we think it feels like to have five representatives of different agencies coming in to help them? ...We need to make sure they proceed from the client's perspective. It has to be built into the governance of these initiatives."

   It is important to consistently bring in the point of view of front-line workers. As evidence, Weiss cited an article by White and Wehlage on a significant community-change, school-linked services initiative funded by the Casey Foundation, in which the authors argue that the initiative failed in part because they neglected to consistently bring in the point of view of front-line workers.
3. *Allowance for variability.* At the local and state level, variability is critical. "It can't be a one-size-fits-all enterprise."





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4. *Recognition of the need for problem solving and conflict resolution.* "We rarely allow time and bring in the skills necessary to train people in how to deal with conflict."

5. *Figuring out how to deal with the B team.* "There are always people in these institutions who say it can't be done and actively try to sabotage it. One of things we've learned over time is there's always a B team, and we better figure out how to deal with it."

6. *Ongoing evaluation and feedback.* "A mechanism is needed that feeds information back on an ongoing basis. There are a variety of ways to accomplish this, including self-assessment and use of a management information system. At the same time, good outcomes information will be needed over the next few years. Any kind of long life [for] these initiatives will depend on evidence that they are effective."

7. *Reconceptualizing professional training.* "We have a major job to do in this country in terms of turning around our professional schools so they turn out the kinds of folks who can operationalize these kinds of programs." Weiss cited the consortium of professional schools led by Sid Gardner (Director, Center for Collaboration for Children, California State University at Fullerton) that is looking at interdisciplinary training.

   "We must recognize that we have to redefine what professionalism is. It means I'm no longer an expert, but a collaborator, a partner with families, a co-learner with other professionals. We must redefine professionalism as the capacity to work effectively with others from a partnership position, honoring everybody's expertise in the process. ...The social workers, educators, and nurses of the future are people not simply trained in content knowledge but in problem solving in seeking and applying new knowledge," said Weiss.

8. *Attention to continuing education and integrated training.* For example, a program in Brattleboro, Vermont comes out of the school system, but has an eclectic staff and opens every training it does to any other professional in the community. The program also works with other agencies to develop a pool of resources for interagency training, and opens up much of their training to parents. "The argument is, if it's good enough for us, why not make it available to parents?"



9. *Recognition that school-linked services are necessary, but not sufficient.* Many initiatives around the country have found they have to be part of larger community building efforts. Weiss cited the example of Beacon Schools, a joint initiative of the New York public schools, youth serving agencies, and many local nonprofit and voluntary organizations. "It is a broad and powerful idea that recognizes that many parents want at least the kinds of formal services that you and I represent, and in fact, most want a friend and a place where they can contribute, as well as receive. We've got to broaden our vision when we think about school-linked services."

Weiss offered what she called "a word of caution": "It's very important to track the impact of resource reduction. As school-linked services become overburdened, that information must get back to the policy arena. This simply involves tracking the number of kids that come in hungry and cold, saying it's because this shelter is closed. Family resource centers are going to play the role of case finding and needs assessment in the policy arena. We have to take on that responsibility so we can begin to come out with some kind of balance in meeting the needs of families."

She added that it is important to frame evaluations to ensure that all collaborators have outcomes which reflect benefit to their individual systems, as well as collective benefits which would not be achievable individually. "I'm very much struck that most of the things we measure as evaluators relate to schools. As a school person, we're asking others to collaborate with us, but we only look at our outcomes. ...I urge those of you who represent other systems to say, 'If you want me to play in your game, public school, then you've got to have some outcomes that show that I can meet my bottom line by collaborating with you.'"

Following Weiss' presentation, Wattenberg asked, "Who is the constituency? Public schools are increasingly dealing with kids for whom the resources are foster care, juvenile court, and a variety of ways in which we get them out of the neighborhood. Who is our constituency for school-linked services and are they powerful enough to meet that extraordinarily important set of challenges?"

Weiss responded that it is important to build a constituency by ensuring that these resources are available to families at all levels of functioning and at all socioeconomic levels. It is also important that they are not stigmatized. "I think key in this is, number one, how we label it. I think family resource center is a good label, not a problem label. Following from that, they must be made universally available within school districts and to every family, something that every family can benefit from, so they are not perceived as for poor kids or problem kids or problem families." As an example, she cited a program in Pennsylvania. They are "starting the centers in stressed neighborhoods, but they try to have something for families that are functioning and for families with difficulties. Then they will have to distribute them also in middle class and upper class districts and have to be perceived as having something valuable that people want. The Early Childhood Family Education Program in Minnesota is a good example of that. They built a constituency and institutionalized themselves. ...However, even with that, they are caught in the difficulty we increasingly have of a private school system and a public school system. Increasingly, people with means are opting out of the public school system altogether. This makes it tougher because the resource base and political constituency may be shrinking."



Weiss added that there is an argument for finding ways to keep as many people with means as possible within the public school system. She cited as a successful example the Parents as Teachers programs in Missouri, which is funded with tax dollars. She said, "Realtors selling houses around St. Louis will talk about the program as a reason to come to that school district." As

another example, Kentucky redesigned their school system about five years ago, and the most popular part of that reform is their family resource centers. "If you can do these programs right, you can build a constituency for public education. ...The smart programs get parents calling legislators."

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# Constructive Critics: Provocative Questions

*Moderator:*
*Senator Larry Pogemiller, District 59*
*Chair, Senate Education Committee*
*Minnesota Legislature*
*St. Paul, Minnesota*

*Panel Members:*
*Senator Jane Ranum, District 63*
*Former Chair, Legislative Committee on Children, Youth, and Families*
*Minnesota State Legislature*
*St. Paul, Minnesota*

*Elaine Salinas, Education Officer*
*Urban Coalition*
*St. Paul, Minnesota*

*Barbara Yates, Director*
*Community Collaborations*
*Minnesota Department of Education*
*St. Paul, Minnesota*

*Veronica Schulz, Principal Planning Analyst*
*Children and Family Services*
*Children's Mental Health Collaborative*
*Hennepin County*
*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

*Barbara Shinn, Principal*
*Anderson Elementary School*
*Minneapolis, Minnesota*

*Jane Ranum* began the discussion by saying, "I was supposed to succinctly describe the characteristics of a successful school-linked services program. My best answer is to listen to what Heather Weiss said. I'm going to do a brief summary."

If a program is going to be successful it has to be an equal partnership. There must be an understanding of the roles and a shared vision between educators and service providers. There must be common goals, common objectives, and measurable outcomes. The partnership is furthered through training and interdisciplinary staff development. Workers must have a fundamental understanding about issues such as attachment, child abuse, and nutrition. "Believe me, not everybody who works with families and children understands." They must also understand team building skills and the importance of trust and respect for relationship. The partnership must involve good planning, including identification of the community's needs and strengths, current services, and gaps. The planning should be based on good surveys with real information. Services should be along a continuum of economic and social needs identified in the community, and should be accessible, friendly, and known. Finally, programs must include evaluations.



"At the state level we are trying to make major system changes. That's what the Family Services Collaboratives Legislation was about. That is what this new Department of Children, Families, and Learning is about. It will be exceedingly difficult to accomplish. If you think that we are trying to do the right things, help us."

*A question and answer session followed:*

Q: "Parental involvement is equated with empowerment of parents. Is it happening or isn't it?"

A: *Barbara Shinn:* "I would say that equating parent involvement with empowered parents is mostly fiction. I will elaborate later if you want."

*Veronica Schulz:* Parent involvement is one strategy to shift our systems, but only one strategy. Collaboration can lead to some parent empowerment, but it has other benefits as well..."programs that will work for real kids in real communities, rather than having bureaucrats sitting in a room and developing program designs. ...If we have parent involvement, we can have programs that will work for their families and their kids and engage them in that process."

Q: "What are the pieces that make innovation sustainable, or why can't they be sustainable?"

A: *Elaine Salinas:* Community ownership is critical to success. "There is a basic philosophical difference I might have with some of the human services or school-linked services discussion and progress to date. I was involved with a group that did a critical analysis of Hennepin County when it went through the service redesign process. We convened a number of people throughout communities, particularly communities of color, and youth groups. We heard repeatedly from the potential users of human services that they often have a sense that somebody else is defining the problem and deciding the solution. We heard they wanted to be part of that process, to have input into deciding their own needs as families, as communities. There is a significant body of research that says interventions have worked because people at the grass roots level have owned the intervention. You can look anywhere where innovation and intervention has been successful and that's been the case. We must begin asking of school-linked services how much ownership is there, and how much ownership do we have to build in from the very beginning if we really want sustained long-term change in these communities."

*Ranum* agreed with Salinas' comment. From the perspective of "the system," programs fail because often an idea comes from a particular legislator, and if that person leaves or for some other reason does not continue to follow the funding, it ends. "That's why it's so important that the system be really reflective of families and children as opposed to reflecting the very centralized and very bureaucratic system."

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*Esther Wattenberg:* There seem to be three points to sustaining innovation: 1) You have to prove it's effective. "As we heard from Heather, we're not in that developmental stage yet." 2) It requires a constituency. "You have to have lots of people who want, need, and require it, and won't go away until they have it. An important question is whether parents who are poor, beleaguered, struggling, can really mount such pressure." 3) You need political leadership. "Can you find it without that constituency at the door?"

Q: "School-linked services to some extent were invented to overcome bureaucracies. How are we doing on that? Is there any simplification of access for families and children?"

A: *Barbara Yates:* There is some progress toward better access. With regard to the family services collaboratives (collaborations of school districts, counties, and public health agencies established with state grants to improve services for children and families), there are about twenty-eight of these running now and twenty-two more are almost ready. "We're seeing family service centers in many places, often focused on early childhood (0-six), but not entirely. About half are located in places where families congregate, such as in Rush City, next to the grocery. The second half seem to be school-based. I think where we have the major challenge...getting the systems to change and getting bureaucracy out of the way. It's where we're going to have to do a better job. Can we simplify these systems and get more local decision-making and local control on how to provide these services?"

"We have become cynical and negative. I struggle mightily with this also, trying to stay positive and focused on what we can do. We're great finger pointers. We know everything that's wrong with the system that we're not working in. Most of us, if we're honest, know what's wrong in the system we're in also. I think what's going to lead to the system's change is leadership, not only political leadership [although that makes a big difference], but...we're going to have to assume leadership. We can't wait any longer. ...We see what's happening in Washington. ...We're going to have fewer rescues. How do we keep them focused, and how do we keep the ethic and spirit of what we're trying to do, what all of us in this room want to do, really working together to make sure children can be successful in Minnesota?"

*Schulz:* School-linked services can help with transportation barriers, and there is some success in improving access to some types of services and increasing quality of services. In the past year, a couple of school-based day treatment services were opened, which increases the quality of the educational program. However, one of the things school-linked services does not do well is address the mobility of families, and there are many very mobile families who move from district to district. In addition, increasing access doesn't necessarily increase the availability of services. School-linked services are just one component of what we need to do to improve access. "There are lots of other things we can do, like having a more family-friendly approach when we meet as staff with families, and working with cultural competence."



Q: "A lot of educators argue that the person in the best position to understand when a child is in trouble is a teacher. Why is there so much emphasis on outreach if that is true? Is it true that the teacher is the outreach worker?"

A: *Salinas:* While teachers do know students to some extent, there are also certain families that schools are never going to see. The school system has to depend on families who can reach them. "Historically in disenfranchised communities, parents often are not comfortable, even opening doors to people who represent the system. This has to do with the way that systems have dealt with different populations of people...We also

have to face the fact that in our core inner cities the majority of our teaching force comes from outside our district. The implications are that most of our teaching force comes from different races and different economic backgrounds and different lifestyles than the students and families they're serving. That kind of disconnection is one of biggest challenges we're facing today. I see it in what I hear oftentimes from people living in core inner city neighborhoods—the mentality that those who come in and go back at night—that somehow these are occupation forces. We have to deal with this reality in our communities because that's the perception."

*Larry Pogemiller:* "As chair of the Education Committee, I ask the question this way, 'Can we afford to have a teacher in the classroom who cannot identify a child who is in trouble and have some idea of how to proceed,' and I think that answer is obvious to us."

Q: "What can schools and human services do with no extra money, with a little extra money, and with a lot of extra money?"

A: *Shinn:* Most of what's needed to improve services is "not money-based." Needed actions include co-location of services, family resource centers, bringing together people to provide holistic services for families and children. "Most of it is invisible dollars. It really takes...building the relationships. It means coming together and spending that time supporting a clear vision of how to bring this new system into place, a shared vision. That's not a money thing. To me it's a way that we have to reorganize our time and our priorities."

"The other critical element is the commitment of people to persevere. We're in high energy, exhausting positions working to improve the social and educational systems for young people. We need committed people who can have some way of sustaining their own wellness throughout this process. We also need attention to diversity. If we are going to engage all the players in this, we must attend to the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of many women who work in or receive services from the system."

"However, once you really get the work going, and you get all these great things going with people, you do need money. We need to reorganize some of the money that we have. ...At Anderson...we got to a point where we needed money for space. We needed space for reorganized services and relationships to grow. Some of the facilities at school are not structured for medical services, and we also needed privacy for mental health services. Also technology for communication is essential within, between home and school, and among and between human service agencies and schools. Also, in bringing parents into participating in the school in meaningful way, there is a need sometimes for remuneration. We can be very creative with that—sometimes it's pay, sometimes its gift certificates, so that it really benefits the parents who are participating."

*Salinas:* Money is not the problem. There is a need to reallocate existing funds and put priorities on children. It's also important to ask ourselves what we would do if we had more money. The work that people like John McKnight have done around community development

is noteworthy. "McKnight says one of the major problems we have in poor, disadvantaged, urban communities is that we have client communities. In other words, we have communities that are no longer producers of their own economies. They're not producers of jobs, they're not producers of the solutions to their own problems, partly because the system has created that. So I think that it's reality that we're going to have declining resources for a very long time. How do we begin to address that? We need to begin to realize that those of us sitting in this room are not the solution. The people who receive services are the only solution."

"I look at Phillips and see what's really working today. The Phoenix Group (a nonprofit community organization that provides low cost housing, economic and business opportunities, and access to nontraditional social services) is working. Phoenix group works because it's a grassroots movement of downtrodden people. You look at other examples for housing projects that have been turned around. It was the tenants who have turned it around. It's not social workers, it's not educators, it's not those of us who sit here discussing this today who are really going to turn this problem around. We can help, but it's really the people who receive services. Somehow we have got to change our paradigm of thinking from doing for people. We have got to get people to work with us to solve all of our problems together."

Q: "We know we won't get sustainability or prevention because 3 percent of kids use 90 percent of resources. Resources won't flow, even if you have effective ownership. ...How can we begin thinking about this?"

A: *Ranum:* "We need to track the costs of violent crime in health care, prisons, and so on, and assess the effect on higher education; and we have to evaluate programs."

*Salinas:* We have to give communities and families room to solve problems. "One of the more innovative things we could do is think about how we could get money to a group in the community that wanted to work on a problem that wasn't part of any kind of formal structure. They're just people who are concerned and decided together that they wanted to do something. ...That is not validated and recognized in our society today, and that's one of our big problems. I think, with declining resources, we're going to see things get much harder for some people—more suicide, more depression, that kind of thing, and we're going to see some people who band together because it's the right and natural thing to do. We've got to find some ways in our system to encourage that."

*Schulz:* The Children's Mental Health Collaborative is starting with a small number of kids and trying to do a better job in reducing the fragmentation and duplication. Often those children "get to the point of using up a lot of our resources because they have failed at various programs." Some strategies they are developing include more individualized and family-based services, partnering with the parents, and moving more resources to earlier intervention. They are also trying to "figure out how we can partner with the community and parents and not take over the whole [resource] pie."

Q: "Most of our efforts to promote systems change really resulted in just tinkering with major institutions. What do you think it will take to get those real core systemic kinds of changes?"

A: *Salinas*: "We've got to figure out how to give people some power so they can hold systems accountable. We have to look at funding in some different ways, at initiatives that produce rather than being based on need."

## *Concluding comments:*

*Wattenberg:* "I do believe we have to tinker. If we wait for large systems and the bureaucratic structures to unravel themselves, we'll wait till the cows come home. I, myself, am beginning to think of partial solutions; the do-able solutions. I think we've identified a group of children to whom we should be responding; young children in the elementary schools. They have been underserved. They have been neglected. We have to pay attention to them. The target population for school-based services has, repetitively, been identified: children in the second grade. It is in the faces of these children one can first grasp the marks of a family's misfortunes."

"Teachers have said to me that they are wonderful case finders—they are very good at identifying acting out children, and those who come to school unfed, unwashed, and unclothed in frigid temperatures—but they need help in recognizing depressed children who come from neglecting families."

"I don't think we can wait for the large systems to begin to instruct us. We have an astonishing richness of program experience and practice wisdom in this community. I think we now have to move to some partial active solutions. If I had my dream, it would be one in which every school had a nurse, a social worker, access to parent participation, and a set of teachers and principals who are committed to making every child in that school become a competent adult, and I think that's within our grasp."

The concept of school-linked services is struggling to find its immutable core. Heather Weiss has challenged us to respond to an acknowledged condition. "...We are in a life threatening situation for our kids and families..." She reminds us of the central importance of school-linked services: "We go to schools, in particular, because it is one of the few institutions uncontested in its universality, and the notion that every child deserves its services..."

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Perhaps it is useful, in the unfolding developing of experimentation in school-linked services, to recall the features necessary to sustain innovation:

- You have to prove it is effective.
- You have to have a constituency demanding the innovation.
- You need political leadership.

On all three of these factors we are close, but defining excellence remains a top item on our agenda.

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